acoustic

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by satsukichan

Summary

Even after the letters stop coming, she remembers their summer together.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

"I wanted to kiss each freckle on your back and make out with you in the backseat of a car to a bad acoustic Radiohead cover and count the stars with you."

That was the first line of the last letter she'd received from him, three months ago and counting. She'd written back that he was an awful poet, that he should never quit his day job, and that if he wanted to make out with her so badly, then he should drive up to see her. She'd expected some reply, shakily written because he'd laughed as he had, maybe a shitty mixtape. Instead, she had gotten silence.

Uzu Sanageyama was weird like that.

By weird, she meant he was an asshole, and that she hated him, and she most certainly hadn't thought of him the last time she rubbed one out, and it wasn't like she'd cried herself to sleep when Satsuki said he wasn't going to write back.

"You don't go from sending three letters a week to complete silence, with not a warning, out of nowhere, Nonon. There isn't going to be another letter."

But she'd known for the first time they threatened to send him home for "contraband" (read: a Playboy and a few joints), that he was a bad boy. And that it was definitely a bad idea to have sneaked into the icebox where they were holding him and asked him where she could score some beer.

The bonfire was a weird place to really have a proper conversation for the first time, or at least one that wasn't literally just:

"There's a store that doesn't ask for ID if you walk half a mile down the road past the bus stop- you know the bus? The one you can take behind the counselor's cabins. Go in and don't say anything stupid."

"Right, thanks."

"Actually, I can get you some if you want?"

"Sweet."

In between red cups of lukewarm Heineken, they shared stories. He lived with his parents and didn't get along with them, on account of his brother, who was going to be a doctor sometime soon. His dad liked the bottle, and also his belt- she remembered the way the scars felt under her fingertips. He smoked Marlboros because his dad smoked Camels, but his older brother didn't smoke at all, and he hated them both. She'd called him greedy for finishing her drink, but he was generous with those cigarettes and shared them with her, even though they made her cough.

He also tasted like an ashtray, she found out soon enough, but he was definitely better than Houka, who she'd kissed drunk on a dare once, and who she was pretty sure was also gay.

They'd made him dye his hair black when he came in, but she suspected he'd brought some green with him, because his hair was the color of wet seaweed the first night. Long after the embers had died down, she'd found herself in a bed of leaves with his fingers in her hair, and it wasn't until he started trying to unbutton her shorts that she pulled away, gasping and breathless.

"Stop. I'm a virgin."

In the darkness, she could never tell, but she was pretty sure he'd flushed. "I'm sorry."

"It's okay." Her fingers had closed around his wrist and pulled them towards her, until his hands, calloused from the guitar, were warm against her breasts. Through the thin shirt, he could feel she wasn't wearing a bra, so she'd whispered in his ear.

"We're both drunk. I won't go all the way, but I'll go pretty far."

When he pressed against her again, she could feel his hard-on.

In retrospect, she could probably chalk up most of their so called summer fling to hormones. They were seventeen then. It was the kind of summer where the heat stuck to you like tape, leaving behind a sticky film. Humidity made wearing clothes unpleasant, and human contact worse, but the heat was more tolerable when it was the skin on skin of two lovers intertwined.

On the hottest day of the summer, the power went out, and the only places that they'd bothered hooking up to the generator were the kitchens and the nurse's office. She'd never been skinny dipping before in her life, so even though the only lights for miles around were the flashlights of lovers in the woods, and the full moon above them, she was still hesitant to drop the towel. He, of course, showed no hesitation.

"Last one in can SUCK MY DICK," he screamed, with no regards to how many rules they were breaking, or the fact that their curfew was half an hour ago and that they were standing naked by the edge of the lake, which was off-limits unless they were supervised. It didn't matter that Uzu was a Red Cross certified lifeguard ("my parents sent me here because they didn't want me around, but I could have had a sweet gig at the beach,"), but at least it made her feel safer. She could only watch in awe as he launched off into a series of cartwheels, a very impressive backflip, and flung his boxers off into the air, diving into the black water with a splash. Suddenly, the lake, with all its mysteries, was more inviting.

And who was she going to kid, Uzu was a looker, but he was even better dripping wet and grinning at her, moonlight reflecting off the rivulets running down his arms.

The water was freezing cold, so that was totally an excuse to hold onto him for dear life, right?

There was the week it rained non-stop, and the paths turned to nearly deadly mud, so he let her sit on his shoulders.

"Do you like being tall?"

“I love it, Monkey.”

“Stop calling me that.”

“Nah.”

(The nickname came along with a rather… unfortunate situation that’d occurred in her cabin when her roommates had been away at dinner and they had been alone, and involved the stuffed monkey plush she’d brought with her from home. For good luck)

“Well, if you look good sitting on my shoulders, imagine how good you’d look sitting on my face.”

She’d kicked him for that. Still, they made a good power couple- him in his worn leather jacket and raggedy flannel, her in his favorite jean jacket (that he’d let her keep!), cutting a clean silhouette, and they parted crowds all through the camp, holding hands.

The only thing they could really do with all the rain was wheel out the projector in the main lodge and play films on the big wall for all the campers to see. She’d learned a lot of things in the darkness while they played Heathers, and even more when they found the janitor’s closet that had been painted over behind the bathrooms the day they were showing Jurassic Park. Her makeup prowess was simply unsurpassed, from the sheer necessity of having to hide all the lovebites he kept leaving on her collarbones.

They were playing Pretty Woman the day that they decided to sneak back up to the cabins alone, and this time, when he pulled the foil wrapped disk from his wallet, she nodded.

Afterwards, she traced patterns on his chest, and he held her close and hummed Nirvana songs into her hair, in order of track listing. He was halfway through Lithium when she finally spoke.

“You should play me something on your guitar.”

He’d laughed.

“They still have it in lock-up, from when they took away my weed.”

“Why?”

“I was hiding it in the case.”

“You’re an idiot. An idiot monkey with green hair.”

“You should dye it to match.”

“I’m not going to ruin my hair so we can look equally dumb.”

“I’m sure you can pull off any color. What’s your favorite?”

“You know this, I told you. It’s pink.”

“Dye it pink.”

“My parents will kill me.”

“Be a little rebellious for once in your life, princess.”

She wanted to call him an idiot again, but then he was kissing her, and she didn’t care anymore about anything but the heat of his mouth and the warmth of his body against hers under the sheets.

On the last day, they’d taken group pictures, but he’d cut them out from the rest in a crude heart and promised to put her half in a locket if she did the same. He followed this with a clip of his hair.

“Is this so I don’t forget your algae hair?”

“Send me pictures of you with pink hair.”

“I told you, I’m not doing that.”

“They gave me back my guitar, by the way.”

The bus wasn’t for another half an hour, so he’d sat on their luggage and pulled out the acoustic guitar she’d heard about all summer, but not seen.

“Do you mind if I sing?”

“Please.”

Uzu hesitated for the briefest moment before he looked at her with surprising gravity,

“Do you like the Smashing Pumpkins?”

“I don’t listen to them a lot, but I’m okay with anything you play, really.”

“Right.”

There was no way of describing her excitement as anything put sheer anticipation, as she watched him tune the instrument, creaky from almost three months of no use. It was made more difficult by the way his hands shook and sweat slicked fingers lost their grip.

When he was done, she sat, face in her hands, waiting patiently. If her eyes weren’t deceiving her, he was blushing.

“Don’t judge me too harshly, okay? I know music’s your thing, but it’s just a hobby for me, and I haven’t played in a while. A-anyway, this song is called Luna, and I’m dedicating it to you. I hope you like it”

His first strums were nervous like him, but his voice was surprisingly smooth, and she listened, transfixed, for most of the song.

Towards the end, his voice caught.

“I’m in love with you…”

She could only watch, slack jawed, as he struggled his way through the rest of the song, repeating the line over and over, each time getting softer and softer, until the tears ran down her cheeks. When he finished, he’d simply looked at her, and then pulled her to his chest, where the tears soaked through his shirt instead.

“Do you mean it?”

“I’m serious as a heart attack, Nonon.”

They didn’t speak much after that, desperate as they were to get as many kisses in as they could before the bus showed up and they packed her suitcases away. She watched him grow smaller in the distance, even as he ran after the bus, throwing up gravel and exhaust smoke, and she couldn’t help but remember their first kiss.

He was from California, a million miles away from her in Rhode Island, but they exchanged addresses (not phone numbers- his parents would kill him if he racked up their phone bill like that), and he promised to send her a cassette of their songs as soon as he got back. The day his package arrived in the mail, she’d grabbed it and run upstairs before her mother could ask what it was. Right on her bed, she’d ripped open the envelope. Half a dozen polaroids spilled out, as well as the cassette he’d wrapped in the sweater of his she’d liked to wear, and seven folded sheets of paper filled with handwriting that was barely legible.

Still, she slept with his words under her pillow and his photos taped on her wall.

They sent photos back and forth the entire year. He and his friends, skateboarding. She and Satsuki, together at prom. He and his friends, kicked out from prom for spiking the punch. The letters piled up in the chest at the foot of her bed, and so did the promises.

“I got my license. For my birthday, I wanna drive to your house and I’m gonna play our song as loud as I can outside your window, or at least before I’m deployed- I’m thinking of enlisting instead of going to college.”

For her birthday, he sent her photos of cake, and then him eating it, but also as many candy bars as he could shove in a box, and a teddy bear with his handkerchief tied around its neck, and a cheesy mixtape that she listened to on her walkman on repeat. For his, she sent him a monkey to match hers, green instead of pink. And then she waited.

And she waited some more.

Weeks added up into months, and the chest at the foot of her bed gathered dust, and she tried to console herself with the fact that it was never meant to go this far, it was supposed to be a summer romance, and it’d been a year since he’d said goodbye to her in person, and really, she was moving into her dorm soon, and she had to leave this stupid infatuation behind-

and yet she brought the letters with her, and the photos too, even though Satsuki side-eyed her when she taped them on her side of the room.

It was Thanksgiving before she heard from him again, and her mother silently handed her a letter when she came back from college in the way she knew meant she'd opened and read it. The handwriting was unfamiliar, but the address was, and she stared in confusion at the words that didn't make sense together, like "accident" and "coma" and "blind".

"I didn't know my brother had a girlfriend until I went through his room, and he must have really cared about you, so I took the liberty of telling you what happened. I've included his number so you can call him if he wakes up-"

She tore up the letter into tiny pieces and didn't come out of her room for dinner.

Winter turned to spring, and she didn't write back. The grass showed through the snow, and when Satsuki asked her to come down to Miami with her for spring break, she shook her head no. Even after she insisted they celebrate her nineteenth birthday, she gave her the same bullshit excuses she'd given everyone else for a while.

"I'm tired, let me stay at home with my parents for the week, I'll be okay, really."

Instead, she laid in bed, and thought about him, and brushed the hair she needed to re-dye, because the pink was starting to fade into white, and she wasn't sure if it was worth the effort again.

The familiar strains of Luna brought tears to her eyes and she made to angrily throw her walkman away, only to realize it was on her nightstand. Confusion set in first. If she wasn't, who was playing Luna at eleven at night in the suburbs?

The sound was coming from outside her window. Morbid curiosity got the better of her, and she climbed out of bed warily to see what was going on.

It took everything she had to not cry when she poked her head outside. Down below, a familiar face was grinning up at her behind shades, and she had to bite her knuckles to keep from screaming. He set down the boombox and cupped his hands around his mouth.

"How you doing, princess?"

She didn't think twice about it. It didn't matter she was on the second floor, and that she was only wearing his jersey and underwear. He opened his arms and she fell, hard, and she didn't care it was a toasty warm fifty degrees, fahrenheit, or that the grass was wet. They tumbled down together, one mass so tightly intertwined she didn't know or care where one of them ended and the other began.

Uzu was here, and he was real and warm as he wrapped her in his jacket, and she didn't let go of him, only wanted to touch him. Slender fingers pulled away at his glasses, and there were fading scars where his eyelids were, but his eyes focused on her, and relief washed over her.

Her first kiss in almost two years was sloppy and wet and perfect, even though she hadn't brushed her teeth and he still tasted like a chimney. He pulled away long enough to rest his forehead against hers, and it wasn't until a calloused thumb wiped away a tear that she realized she was crying.

"You're an asshole."

"I love you too."

They stayed like that for a long while, until he finally broke the silence to whisper in her ear.

"I've got a car and it's a clear night out. Want me to make those promises real?"

"Please."

"Aren't you a little underdressed for the occasion, though?"

"Be a gentleman. Let me borrow your jacket."

"Okay, but only because I like what you've done with your hair."

"Are you ever going to stop being embarrassing?"

His laugh was enough of an answer, and cute enough that she didn't even make a crack about his acid washed jeans being more hole than denim, and she climbed into the backseat of his cadillac (green monkey hanging from around his rearview mirror) so he could kiss her like he had in the summer, when they were young and dumb together. And even though there was no Radiohead, there was him, and there was her.

End Notes

Don't ever write the ideas that pop into your head at 5 AM, they're never any good. This turned out more nauseatingly cute than I wanted it to be, but oh well. My tumblr is satsukichan, as always.

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